A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

KING

December 31. 1665.

AT

CHRIST-CHURCH

IN

OXFORD.

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OXFORD

AND

CHRIST-CHURCH

II. *Chap.* of St. *Luke*, part of the 34. *verſ.*

Behold this Child is ſet for the fall and riſing again of many in Iſrael, and for a ſigne which ſhall be ſpoken againſt.

AND *Simeon Bleſſed them, and ſaid*, &c. A *Benediction* ſure of a moſt ſtrange importance: If to bring forth one that is to be a large deſtruction, if to be deliver'd of a Child that muſt be for the *fall of many*, and the killing of the Mother's ſelf, be *bleſſed*; if Swords and Ruines be comforts, then my Text is full of theſe: But if this be to *Bleſs*, what is it to *foreſpeak* and *abode ill*? Yet however ominous and fatall the words are; they give us the *event*, and, the *deſigne* too of the Bleſſed Incarnation of the Son of God, the Child of this Text and of this Seaſon: a ſhort view of *Gods Counſel* in it; and the *Effects* of it. The *Effects* in theſe particulars.

1. *This Child is for the fall of many.*
2. *For the rising again of many.*
3. *For a signe:* with the quality of that signe, he is *for a signe that shall be spoken against.*

2. The *Counsel* and *Designe* of this is signifyed in the word here κεῖται: he is *set*, and preordain'd to be all this.

First of the first effect, *This Child is for the fall of many.*

And here I shall but only name that way whereby many men set this Child for their own fall, while they make his holy Time to be but a more solemne oportunity of sinning: We know many celebrate this great Festival with Surfets & Excesses usual appendages of Feasting; Oaths and Curses the ingredients of Gaming; Dallyance and Lasciviousness the attendants of sporting, of all which this seems as it were the *Anniversary*, a set time for their return. Thus indeed the *Israelites* did solemnize the Birth of their *Idol-Calf*, *They sate down to Eat and Drink, and rose up to play.* And must we celebrate *this Child* too like that *Calf*, because he was born among *Brutes*? And must his Votaries also be of

Exod. 32. 6

the

the *Heard*? And he live and be worshipp'd alwayes in a *Stable*? Because *God* became *man*, must *men* therefore become *beasts*? Is it fit to honour that Child with Iniquity and Loosness, that did come into the World upon designs of Holiness, to settle a most strict Religion? Nothing can be more incongruous then this; and certainly there is nothing of Gods Counsel in it. But to you whose time seems nothing else but a constant Festival, alwayes hath the Leisure, and the Plenties, and the Sports of one, who as to these things keep a *Christmas* all their life, this season as it does not seem to challenge those things to it self peculiarly, so I shall not now insist on them; but proceed to those wayes by which *Simeon* did Prophecy, *This Child would be for the fall of many in Israel.* And they are three,

1. *This Child* whom I but now declar'd *God had prepar'd to be the Glory of his People Israel*, yet his Birth was so inglorious, and his Life answerable to it, shall be so mean and poor, and his Death so full of shame and curse, that these shall prove a *scandal* to his people, who shall be *offended* at them, *V.* 31, 32.

and being prepoſſeſt with prejudices of a Pompous Royal *Meſſiah*, they will not believe in this, but reject a Saviour that comes upon thoſe diſadvantages, which will therefore prove occaſions of falling to them.

Rom. 9. 33. 1 Pet. 2. 6. That it was ſo is expreſsly ſaid, *Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner ſtone, a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence.* And that it was ſo upon this account is clear, The great ones cry out John 9. 29. of him, *This fellow we know not whence he is*: They that ſeem'd to know whence did upbraid him with it, Mar. 6. 3. *Is not this the Carpenter?* And therefore with a deal of ſcorn they queſtion, John 7. 48. *Do any of the Rulers or the Phariſees believe in him?* Yea, *Chriſt* himſelf knew this would be ſo great a ſcandal that in the 11 *Chapter* of St. *Mathew*, in the cloſe of many Miracles which he wrought on purpoſe to demonſtrate he was the *Meſſiah* he adds *verſ. 6. and Bleſſed is he that ſhall not be offended in me.* As if he thought his mean condition would prove a greater argument againſt him then his mighty works were for him: and it were a vaſter Prodigy to ſee the *Saviour* of the world, the promiſed *Meſſiah*, poor and abject, then to ſee one *cure the Blind*, and *heal the Lame* and

raiſe

raiſe the Dead; and they might think they had a ſtranger Miracle to confirm their unbelief, then any he would work to make them believe in him.

And really, that the *Kingdom* of the *Meſſiah*, which the *Prophets* did expreſs in terms as high as their own Extaſies and Raptures, in tranſported words, as if it Vied with *Gods* Dominion, both for extent and for duration, ſhould prove at laſt an Empire onely over *twelve poor Fiſhermen* and *Publicans*, and one of them a *Traytor* too: And that He that was born this *King*, ſhould be born in a *Stable*, while he liv'd that he ſhould not have an *hole to put his Head in*, nor his *Corps* in when he *died*, but his *Grave* too muſt be *Charity*, this would ſtartle any that did wait for the *Redemption of Iſrael* in thoſe glorious expreſſes which the Prophets tract it out in. To you indeed that are Votaries to *this Child*, are confirm'd Chriſtians, theſe ſeeming diſadvantages can give no prejudice: However mean and abject his condition were, that cannot make you to deſpiſe him, who from that muſt needs reflect how dear you were to God, when for your ſakes meerly he became

came so mean and abject. *He became poor,* 2 Cor. 8. 9. saith St. *Paul, that you through his poverty might be made rich:* He was made the *Child* of *Man,* that you might be made *Sons* of *God*; it was to pay the price of your Redemption that he so *emptied himself*; thus he valued you; and men do not despise meerly *because,* and *by those measures* that, they are esteem'd, these are not there turns of love, its passionate, obliging, ravishing effects do not use to be thus requited, this his great descent cannot occasion your fall, who know he descended only to assume you up to glory. But 'tis worth inquiry, why, since it was certaine, that for this, *this Child* should be *the fall of Israel*; that for this they would reject him, and the meanness of his condition would prove an unremoveable obstruction to their belief, as it is to this day; Why yet he would choose to be born in a condition so in the utmost extream to his own nature, so all contradiction to his Divinity, and so seemingly opposite to the very end of his coming.

'Εαυτὸν ἐκένωσε. Phil. 11. 7.

The *Jew* indeed, will find no excuse for his infidelity from this condition: for what ever that were, yet those *Miracles* that made the

the *Devils* to *confeſs* him, brought conviction enough to make *Jews inexcuſable*. And it was obvious to obſerve, that He who *fed five thouſand with five loaves and two fiſhes*, till they left more then was ſet before them, needed not to be in a condition of want or meanneſs, if it were not otherwiſe more needful he ſhould not abound. *God*, that when *He brought this firſt begotten Son into the world*, ſaid, *Let all the Angels of God worſhip him*, might have put him into an eſtate which all *mankind* moſt readily would have done *Homage* too: as eaſily have dreſt his *Perſon* with a *blaze* of *Pompe* and *Splendor*, as his *Birth-day* with a *Starre*, If there had not been neceſſity it ſhould be otherwiſe. And ſuch there was. For *when the fulneſs* both of *time* and *iniquity was come*, when Vice could grow no further, but did even cry for Reformation, and when the Doctrine that muſt come to give the rules of this Reformation, was not only to wage War with *fleſh* and *blood*, with thoſe deſires which *conſtitution* gives, but which *perpetual univerſal cuſtome* had confirm'd, and which their *Gods* alſo, as well as *inclinations*, did contribute to, which their *Original ſin*, and

Matth. 14. 19,20,21.

Heb. 1. 6.

and their *Religion* equally fomented; for *Vice* was then the *Worship* of the world, *Sins* had their *Temples*, *Theft* its *Deity*, and *Drunkenness* its *God*, *Adultery* had *many*, and to *prostitute their bodies* was most *sacred*, and their very *Altar-fires* did *kindle* these *foul heats*, whence *Uncleanness* is so often call'd *Idolatry* in Scripture: And besides all this, all the *Philosophy*, and all the *power* of the world ingag'd in the belief and practise of this, and resolv'd with all their *wit* and *force* to keep it so. When it was thus, the Doctrine that must come to oppose, controul, reform, all this must come either arm'd with *fire* and *sword*, design to settle it selfe by *conquest*, or come in a way of *meekness* and of *suffering*: The first of these *Religion* cannot possibly design, because it cannot aime to settle that by *violence*, which cannot be *forc'd*, and where 'tis *force*, is not *Religion*. One may as well invade, and hope to get a *conquest* over *thoughts*, and put a *mind* in *chains*, and *force* a man to *will against his will*. All such motives are incompetent to demonstrate Doctrines, for how ever successful their force proves, yet it cannot prove the Doctrines true; for by that Argument

it

it proves that Religion that it *ſettles* true, it proves that it *deſtroyes* was true before, while it prevail'd and had the power. Had *this Child* come ſo, he had only given ſuch a teſtimony to to the truth of *Chriſtianity*, as *Heatheniſme* had before, and *Turciſme* hath ſince: He might indeed, have drown'd the wicked world again in another deluge, of their own blood: but ſure, never had reform'd it thus. Therefore, That Religion, that muſt oppoſe the Cuſtoms, and the Powers of the world, upon Principles of Reaſon and Religion, muſt do it by *Innocence* and *Patience*, by *doing good*, and (which was neceſſary, then by conſequence, as the world ſtood,) by *ſuffering evil*: parting with all, not only the advantages, but neceſſaries of this life, and life its ſelf too, where they ſtood in competition, and were inconſiſtent with mens duties, and their expectations: and by this means they muſt ſhew the world that their Religion did *bring in a better hope*, then that which all the profits, pleaſures, glories of this world can entertain and flatter. Heb. 7.19.

Thus they did, and thus they did prevaile for the firſt ages of the Church, were but ſo

many centuries of men, that entertain'd Christianity with the contempt of the world, and life it self. They, knew to put themselves into *Christs* Service and Religion, was the same thing, as to set themselves aside for spoyle and rapine, dedicate themselves to poverty and scorn, to racks and tortures, and to Butchery it self. Yet they enter'd into it; did not onely renounce the pomps and vanities of the world in their Baptism, when they were new born to God; quench their affections to them, in those waters, but renound'd them, even to the death; drown'd their affections to them, in their own heart blood: ran from the world into flames, and fled faster from the satisfactions and delights of earth, then those flames mounted to their Element and Sphere: In fine, they became *Christians* so, as if they had been *Candidates of Death*, and only made themselves *Apprentises of Martyrdome*. Now, if it were not possible, it should be otherwise then thus, as the world stood, then it was necessary that the *Captaine of Salvation*, should lead on, goe before, this *noble Army of Martyrs*; if it were necessary that they must *leave all who followed Him*, then it

Heb. 11. 10

was

was not possible that He should be here in a state of Plenty, Splendor, and Magnificence, but of Poverty, and Meanness; giving an example to his followers, whose condition could not but be such. To give which example, was it seems, of more necessity, then by being born in Royal Purple, to prevent the *fall of many in Israel*, who for his condition despis'd him.

I am not so vain, as to hope to perswade any from this great Example here, to be in love with Poverty, and with a low condition, by telling them, this Birth hath consecrated meanness, that we must not scorn those things, in which our *God* did choose to be *install'd*, that *humility* is, it seems, the proper dress for *Divinity* to shew it self in. But when we consider, if this Child had been born in a condition of Wealth and Greatness, the whole Nation of the *Jews* would have receiv'd him; whereas that he chose, prov'd an occasion of *falling* to them: Yet, that *God* should think it much more necessary, to give us an example of Humility and Poverty below expression; then it was necessary that that whole Nation

should believe on him. When of all the Virgins of that People, which God had to choose one out to *overshadow*, and impregnate with the *Son of God*, He chose one of the *meanest*, (for *he hath regarded the low estate of his Handmaiden*, said she,) and one of the poorest too, for she had not a *Lamb* to *offer*, but was *purifyed, in formâ pauperis*. When he would reveal this *Birth* also, that was to be *the joy of the whole Earth*, he did it to none of that Nation, but a few *poor shepheards*, who were labouring with midnight-watches over their Flocks; none of all the great ones, that were then at ease, and lay in softs, was thought worthy to have notice of it: Lastly, when the *Angels* make that *poverty* a signe to know the *Saviour* by. *This shall be a signe unto you, You shall find the Babe wrapt in swadling cloaths, and lay'd in a Manger*: as if the *Manger* were sufficient testimony to the *Christ*, and this great meanness were an evidence 'twas the *Messiah*. From all these together, we may easily discover what the *temper* is of *Christianity*. You see here the *institution* of your Order: the *First-born* of the Sons of *God*, born but

Luk. 1. 48.

Luk. 2. 24. compared with Lev. 12. 6, 8.

Luk. 11, 12

to

to *such* an *Estate*. And what is so *Original* to the Religion, what was *born* and *bred* with it, cannot easily be divided from it. *Generatio Christi generatio populi Christiani, natalis Capitis natalis Corporis.* The body and the head have the same kind of birth, and to that which *Christ* is born to, *Christianity* it self is born. Neither can it ever otherwise be entertain'd in the heart of any man, but with *poverty of spirit*, with neglect of all the *scorns*, and the *calamities*, yea, and all the *gaudy glories* of this world, with that *unconcernedness* for it, that *indifference* and *simple innocence* that is in *children*. *He that receiveth not the Kingdom of Heaven as a little Child, cannot enter thereinto*, saith Christ: True indeed, when the *Son of God* must become a *little child*, that he may *open the Kingdom of Heaven to Believers*. Would you see what *humility* and *lowliness* becomes a Christian? see the *God* of Christians on his *Royal Birth-day*. A *person of the Trinity*, that he may take upon him our Religion, takes upon him the *form of a Servant*; and *He* that was *equal with God*, must *make himself of no Reputation*, if he mean to settle and be the Example of our profession.

Chrysol.

Mat. 18. 3.

Phil. 2. 6, 7.

sion. And then, when will our *high spirits*, those that value an *huffe* of *Reputation* more then their own *souls*, and set it above *God* himself, when will these become *Christians*? Is there any more unpouth or detestable thing in the whole world, then to see the *great Lord of Heaven* become *a little one*, and *man* that's less then nothing *magnifie* himself? to see Divinity *empty it self*, and him that is a worm, *swell* and be *puffed* up: to see the *Son of God* descend from Heaven, and the *sons of Earth* climbing on heaps of wealth, which they pile up, as the *old Gyants* did *hills upon hills*, as if they would invade that Throne which He came down from: and as if *they* also were *set for the fall of many*, throwing every body down that but stands near them, either in their *way* or *prospect*. Would you see how little value all those interests that recommend this world, are of to Christians? see the *Founder* of them choose the opposite extream: not onely to discover to us, these are no accessions to felicity, *This Child* was the *Son of God* without them: but to let us see that we must make the same choice too, when ever any of those interests affront a duty, or soli-

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cite a good Conſcience, whenſoever indeed they are not reconcileable with *innocence, ſincerity,* and *ingenuity*. It was the want of this diſpoſition and temper that did make the *Jews* reject our *Saviour*. They could not endure to think of a Religion that would not promiſe them to *fill their basket*, and to *ſet them high above all Nations of the Earth*, and whoſe appearance was not great and ſplendid, but lookt thin and maigre, and whoſe *Principles* and *Promiſes* ſhew'd like the *Curſes* of their Law, *call'd* for *ſufferings*, and did *promiſe perſecution*, therefore they rejected him that brought it, and ſo *this Child was for the fall of many in Iſrael.* Deut. 28. 1. 5. Mar. 10 30

2. *This Child* is *for the fall of many* by the *holineſs* of his *Religion*: while the *ſtrictneſs* of the *Doctrine* which he brings, by reaſon of mens great *propenſions* to *wickedneſs*, and their *inability* to *reſolve againſt their Vices*, will make them *ſet themſelves againſt it*, both by *word* and *deed*: for they will *contradict* and *ſpeak ill of*, yea, they will openly *renounce*, and *fall away* from *it* and *him*.

1. For that reaſon they will *contradict*, *ſpeak ill of* Him and of his Doctrines; This is ſaid expreſly

expreſly in the laſt words of my Text, *He is for a ſign that ſhall be ſpoken againſt*; that is, *that very holineſs both of his Life and Doctrine, that ſhall make him ſignal, it ſhall make him be derided and blaſphem'd.* As if his being a Σημεῖον for an *Enſigne lifted up*, a *Standard* for all Nations, were not for them to *betake themſelves to*, but to *level* all their *batteries againſt*. Accordingly we find they call'd him *Beelzebub*, becauſe he *caſt out Devils*. And all this was foretold: for although he were *fairer then the children of men*, Pſal. 45. yet *Iſa.* 53. It is ſaid, *He hath no form nor comelineſs, when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty in him, that we ſhould deſire him, he is deſpiſed and rejected of men.* Surely, becauſe his *holineſs* did cloud and darken all his *graces*. *Devotion* in a countenance does *writh* and *diſcompoſe* it, prints *deformity* upon it, and eyes *lifted up* with ardency, look as bad as eyes *diſtorted*, ſet *awry*. Nay *Majeſty*, when it was moſt *ſevere* and *pious*, never yet could guard Religion from theſe *ſcorns*. *David*, that *great* and *holy* King, ſayes of himſelf, *I wept and chaſten'd my ſelf with faſting, and that was turned to my reproof*, as if *Repentance* were among his *crimes*, and he muſt be

Iſai. 11. 10.

Mat. 10. 25. Mar. 3. 22.

Pſalm. 69. 10, 11, 12.

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corrected for his *diſcipline*. *I put on Sack-cloth alſo, and they jeſted upon me, they that ſat in the gate ſpake ægainſt me, and the Drunkards made Songs upon me.* Sure theſe jolly men are not companions to thoſe *Angels, in whoſe preſence there is joy over one ſinner that repenteth*; that his vertue ſhould be a *rejoycing*, and a *ſong* to them too. Certainly the penitent mans *tears* do not fill their *chearful bowls*, nor his *groans* make thoſe *airs* which they ſet their *drunken catches* to. But that we may be ſure it never will be otherwiſe, St. *Peter* tells us, *That in the laſt days there ſhall come ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts.* Now the men of our *dayes* have the luck to obey Scripture thus far as to make that Prophecy to come to paſs; for thoſe *ſcoffers* are come in *power and great glory*. The *Pſalmiſt* tells us of a *chair of ſcorners*, as if theſe were the only men that ſpeak *ex cathedra*: and ſure *ſcoffs* and *taunts at Religion* are the onely things that may be talk'd *with confidence a loud*: They imprint an Authority on what is ſaid, and converſations that are moſt inſipied on all other ſcores, get accompt as they come up towards this practiſe: hence they *gain degrees, commence ingenious* as they border

Luk. 15. 10

2 Pet. 3. 3.

Pſal. 1. 1.

on these *Atheistical* and *irreligious blasphemies*; and when it is *pure scorne*, then it is in the *Chaire*.

But it stays not there; For 2. Upon the same account of strictness of Religion, men will *fall off from*, and *openly renounce* both *Christ and his Religion*. This is that our *Saviour* himself found, *Light* (saith he) *is come into the world, and men lov'd darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil*. And he said of the *Pharisees*, *They repented not that they might believe*, as knowing it impossible that they could venture to believe that Doctrine which condemn'd those courses they would not repent of.

Joh. 3. 19.

Mat. 21. 32

And if I should affirm, that it is nothing else but mens *unwillingness to be oblig'd* to those things, which if there be a *God*, and a *Religion* which this *Child* was set to institute, they must account themselves *oblig'd* to; nothing else but this, which makes them so *unwilling to believe a God or Christ*; yea, openly *renounce* them both, and their Religion, I should have for this, not onely the late instance of a Nation in the *Indies*, which by institution of the *Portugals*, was easily perswaded to embrace

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the Christian Creed, and was Baptiz'd into our Faith; but when they were requir'd to lead their lives according to *Christs* Precepts, and renounce their *Heathen Licences*, they chose rather to renounce their *Creed* and *Saviour*, and return'd instantly to their indulgent *Heathenisme*. But to this experience, give me leave to add this reason, that it is not the *difficulty* of the *mysteries of faith*, and their being above our *comprehension*, which makes them not to be receiv'd, because there are as great difficulties in *things that we are certain of*. For in the very *sphere of Reason*, within the *lines* and *measures* of her own *infallibility*, in things of which she does assure her self by *diagrams* and *sense*, yet she is as much amaz'd as at those objects in the *highest* and *remotest Regions of faith*, and *Mathematicks* hath her *Paradoxes* that stand in as great danger of a contradiction as any of *Religions mysteries*, while reason cannot *cape* what she *demonstrates*, but is to seek how those things can be *possible* which she proves *most certaine*, and they are *incomprehensible* to her, even when they are most *evident*: and then sure if we can think there is a *God*, we must needs think *He* can do things

Myster. (ut vocari solet) Asymptoticum & Angul. contingent. &c

we cannot *comprehend*, when it is plain our *reason* cannot *comprehend* what *she her self* does *find out* and *create*. It is not therefore contradiction to *Reason*, but to *Appetite*, that makes things of *Religion* so *incredible*, which I thus demonstrate to the *Atheist*.

Those very difficulties, to avoid which, he *denies* a *God*; to wit, *Those of an Eternal Being that is of himself*; these very things he *must* and *does acknowledge* in the being of the *world*, if that either be it *self* Eternal (as the *Atheist* of the *Peripatetick* Tribe will have it) or else if its *atomes*, out of which it was concreted, were: (as those of *Epicurus* heard assert.) In a word, if they say the *world* or its *materials* were made, they grant a *God* that made it; If they say they were *not made*, they assert then an *Eternal Being of its self*; that is, They *allow* those difficulties for which they pretend to *deny* a *God*.

There being therefore the same difficulties, (Greater I could prove them, from the diverse natures of corporeal, and spiritual beings, for we are sure, in *bodies* that are still in *motion*, and so subject to *succession*, those things are impossible, but if there be a *Being* that

that is *not in motion*, & by consequence, not subject to the *laws* of *our time*, all these knots untie themselves, those difficulties vanish & have no place: But to say no more then I have shew'd, *there being the same difficulties*,) in the *Atheists hypothesis* as in the *other*, 'tis apparent, not the *difficulties* of *belief*, but *practice*, make him fix upon his own against the *common notions* of the world. So, that 'tis not his *understanding*, but his *appetite* frames his *hypothesis*, & without figure, tis his *will* that he *believes* with. And it is most evident, that because men do not love the *precepts* of *Religion*, would not have them be their *duty*, therefore they would have the *Doctrines* of it not be *truths*; and in this they are the Disciples only of their lusts, & because they cannot resolve to be otherwise, therefore they resolve not to be *Christ*'s *Disciples*, but reject him for his holy Doctrines sake: and so *this Child is for the fall of many*.

But it were strange if upon this account, *Christ* should be for the fall of any of us; who have learnt a trick to reconcile his *severe Doctrines*, and our *Sins* together. Where Vice most abounds, though it be willful, and men persevere in it, they are so far from finding

any reaſon to *fall off from him*, or from his *Goſpel* for this, that they therefore take the *faſter hold of it*, rely upon Him with the *bolder, ſtronger confidence.* As if good old *Simeon* were miſtaken, when he thought, becauſe men would not leave thoſe ſins which Chriſt ſo threatned, therefore they would leave him: becauſe they could not beare thoſe his hard ſayings, to *pull out* the *luſt* and the *Eye too*: *caſt away* the *treaſures* of *unrighteouſneſs*, and the *right hand* that receives them alſo; therefore they would caſt off *him*, for, for this reaſon they betake themſelves to him more eagerly, devolve and caſt themſelves upon him with aſſurance. 'Tis poſſible indeed that the new Chriſtian'd *Indians*, might believe themſelves oblig'd to lead their lives according to the vow that they had made in Baptiſme, knew not how to live a contradiction to be *Chriſtian Pagans*; therefore thought it abſolutely neceſſary, to renounce the one, and to reject Chriſt and his *ſtrict Religion was eaſier* they thought. Our *Saviour* alſo might ſuppoſe, that when he brought *light* into the world, men would not receive that *light*, becauſe their deeds were evil: But our modern wickedneſſes

that

that are of the true Eagle kind, are educated, bred up to *endure*, and to *defie* the light: our deeds of night have learn'd to face both *Sun* and *Men*, yea and face the *Sun of Righteouſneſs*, and the *light* of thoſe *flames that are to receive them*. Our *Saviour* told the *Phariſees* indeed, that *that they repented not, that they might believe*, for thinking it impoſſible they could *aſſent* to what he did *affirm*, except they would *conſent* to what he did *command*, He therefore thought they were *not able* to *believe*, becauſe they would not *purpoſe to amend*. But there is nothing difficult in this to us, who at the ſame time, are ſo perfectly reſolv'd that every threat of Goſpel is ſo *divine truth*, as that we aſſure our ſelves, that we could be content to *die Martyrs* to the truth of them, rather then renounce one tittle of them; yet even then are *Martyrs* to thoſe *luſts* and *paſſions* which thoſe threats belong to: Who, at once, believe this Book of God, that ſaies, *except ye repent ye ſhall all periſh*; and believe alſo, that notwithſtanding we do not repent, yet by *Believing* we ſhall *ſcape*, not periſh, but be ſav'd. And is not this directly to believe our ſelves into *damnation*? Luk. 13. 3.

the

the *third* and the *great fall*, which *this Child is set for.*

3. *This Child is for the fall of many*, to wit, of all those, who on these, or any other grounds do *not believe in*, or do *not obey him*, who shall therefore *fall into Eternal ruine.*

This our *Saviour* does affirm, St. *John* 3.19. *This is the condemnation that light came into the world*, &c. This does aggravate the guilt, and sentence. We were fal'n before indeed in *Adam*: and I dare not undertake to be so learned to say *whether*; to determine with some of them, that was but a fall from *Paradise* into the *grave*, and we were forfeit to *death only*: But I may adventure to affirm, that in the *second Adam*, sinners finally impenitent shall fall much farther then we did in the *first Adam.* Now their *pit* shall have *no bottom*, but *this light that came to lighten them*, shall be to them *consuming fire, and everlasting burnings.* And all reason in the world. For, upon that fall of ours in *Adam*, help was offer'd us: an easie way, not only to repair those ruines, but to better infinitely that estate which we were faln from; and a way that cost God dear

Rev. 9. 1. 11

to

to purchaſe, coſt him, not this *Incarnation* only, but the *Death* and *Paſſion* of *his Son*, and diverſe other bleſſed methods Salvation: Now if we *refuſe* the mercy of all this, and *ſcorn* theſe miracles of condeſcending goodneſs, and *defie* thoſe methods, that he makes uſe of, to raiſe us from our fall, it is apparent we *provoke* and *chooſe deeper ruine*; this refuſal hath in it ſuch deſperate malignity, as to poyſon this great mercy of the *Incarnataion*, and all the reſt. 'Tis but a ſmall thing to ſay, that they who *Stumble at this Rock of their Salvation*, ſpurning at it by their wilful diſobedience, that theſe make an infinite maſs of loving-kindneſs to be loſt upon them, ſo as that *Salvation cannot ſave them*; for alas *Salvatio ruines* them the *deeper*, & *this Child is for their fall*. The condition they were forfeit to before by reaſon of their breach of the firſt *covenant* was advantage, comfortable in compariſon of that which Chriſt dos put them in; *This is the Condemnation*, that he came into the world: and it had been infinitely better for them that *this child too, had never been born*. The unreform'd have the leaſt reaſon in the world to ſolemnize this feſtival, they do but

celebrate the *birth of their own ruine*, bow down, and do reverence to their *fall*: had it not been for this, they had not gon to so severe an Hell. So that they do but entertain the great occasion of their greater condemnation. Such it proves to them, & that it might be so, *He was fore-ordain'd for it*: κεῖται, *This Child is set for the fall of many*, which dos lead me to *Gods Councel in all this*: my next part.

This Child is set for the fall of many, even *by Gods direct appointment*, for saith *Grotius*, *Accedo iis qui putant non nudum eventum sed & consilium Dei significari. I am of their opinion, who understand not the success alone, but the designe of this Childs coming, and Gods counsel in it is intended here.* And without disputing of Gods *antecedent* will, and *consequent*, this is safely said: *God* design'd this Child should be such an one, that they who had no inclinations for *Virtue*, would not entertain the *love* of it, but counted it a *mean pedantick* thing, and all its *Rules* & *Laws*, *unreasonable servitude*, these loose men would certainly *reject Him* and his *Doctrines*, which were so *severe* and *strict*. Those that did pretend *friendship* for *Virtue*, and a *service* for *Religion*, but withal

Grot. in loc.

withal must be allow'd to maintain correspondence with the *world*, seek the *honours* and *advantages* of *Earth*, and will *trespass* on *Religion* where it enterfers with *these*, *break* with *Virtue* when their *interests* cannot consist with it, these *false hipocritical pretenders*, should be *offended* with the *mean condition* of this *Child*, and of his *followers* in this world, and with the *poor spirited principles* of his *Religion*. In summe, they that upon these, or any other grounds *finally disbelieve*, or *disobey* him, *God* design'd *this Child* to be a means of bringing *sorer punishments*, even to *everlasting ruine* upon such.

A *black decree* this one would think. He that had so much *kindness* for mankind, to give away the *onely Son*, both of his *Nature*, his *Affections*, and his *Bosome* to them; could he then *designe* that *gift* to be the ruine of the *greatest part of men*? *This Child*, *Simeon* said but just before my Text, *is Gods Salvation, which he had prepar'd before all people*, and does he now say *God* hath *set him for their fall*? The *Angels* preach'd this was a Birth that *brought glad tydings of great joy that should be to all people*, and is there so much *comfort* in *de-*

ſtruction, that moſt men ſhould *rejoyce* at that which is ordeined to be the *great occaſion of it to them*?

But we have no reaſon to complaine: tis not unkind to *deny Mercy* to them that *refuſe* the *offers* of it, that will not *accept Salvation*, when their *God himſelf* does come to bring it to them: tenders it upon *condition* of *accepting* and *amending*: which if they *deſpiſe*, and preferre *Hell* before *Repentance*, chooſe *ſin* rather then *Gods bleſſed retributions*, 'tis but reaſon to deny them what they *will not have*, and let them take their *choſen ruine*; *will* their judgement which they *will themſelves*, *ſet* and *ordeine* Him to be *that* to them, which themſelves do *ordeine*, and make him to be to themſelves. So St *Peter* ſays expreſsly:

1 Pet. 2. 8. *He is a Stone of ſtumbling and a Rock of offence to them who being diſobedient ſtumble at the word, whereunto they were appointed.* *Diſobedience* where it is *obdurate*, alters ſo the temper of our *God*, that it makes Him who *ſwears he would not have the ſinner die*, yet *ſet out* his *ſon* to make *ſuch ſinners fall into eternal death*. Makes *judgement* triumph over *mercy*, even in the *great contrivances* and *executions* of that

mercy

mercy; and while *God* was plotting an *Incarnation* for the *everlasting safety* of mankind, prevails with him to *decree ruins* by the means of that *salvation*, to decree even in the midst of all those *strivings* of his *mercies*, that that *Issue of* his *kindness should* be *for the fall* of such as *they*. Oh! let such consider, whether they are likely to escape that which is *set* and *ordein'd* for them by *God*? Whether they can hope for a *redemption*, when the only *great Redeemer* is *appointed* for the *Instrument* of their *destruction*; and *God* is so *bent on their ruine*, that to purchase it he *gives this Child his Son*. Yea, when he did look down upon *this Son* in *Agonies*, and on the *Cross*, in the midst of that sad prospect, yet the *ruine of such sinners*, which he there beheld in his Sons blood, was a *delight* to him, that also was a *sacrifice*, and a *sacrifice* of a *sweet smell* to him. For Saint *Paul* says, *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that perish*, because *we are the savour of death unto death to them*: As if their *brimstone* did ascend like *Incense*, shed a *perfume* up to *God*, and their *everlasting burnings* were his *Altar-fires*, *kindled* his *holocausts*; and He may well be *pleased* with it, for He *ordein'd* it. 'Tis

2 Cor. 2. 15

'Tis true indeed, *this Child riding* as in *Triumph*, in the midst of his *Hosannas*, when he saw one City, whose *fall* he was *set* for on this very accompt; He was so far from being pleas'd with it, that He *wept over it* in pity. But alas, that onely more declares the most *deplor'd* and *desperate* condition of such sinners. *Blessed Saviour!* Hadst thou no *blood* to shed for them? *nothing* but *tears?* or didst thou *weep* to think thy very *bloodshed* does but make their *guilt* more *crimson*, who refuse the mercy of that *bloodshed* all the time that is offer'd? *Sad* is their state that can find no *pity* in the *tears of God*, and *remedilesse* their condition for whom all that the *Son of God* could do, was to *weep* over them, all that he did do for them, *was to be their fall*; Too sad a part indeed for *Festival Solemnity*, very improper for a *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*. To celebrate the greatest act of kindness the *Almighty* could design onely by the *miseries* it did occasion, to magnifie the vast descent of *God*, from *Heaven* down to *Earth*, onely by reason of the *fall* of man into the *lowest Hell* of which that was the cause. My Text hath better things in view: the greatness of that

fall

fall does but add height to that *Reſurrection* which He alſo is the cauſe of: For, *Behold this Child is ſet for the riſing again of many*: my remaining part.

Riſing again, does not particularly and only refer to the *foregoing fall* here in the Text, which *this Child* did occaſion, as I ſhew'd you, but to the ſtate wherein all mankind, both in its *nature* and its *cuſtoms*, lay ingulf'd, the *ſtate* of *ignorance* and *ſin*: a *ſtate* from which *recovery* is properly ἀνάστασις, a *reſurrection* and a *reviving* in this life, and ſo call'd in Scripture often; as *Epheſ.* 5. 14. *Wherefore he ſaith, Awake thou that ſleepeſt* ἀνάστα ἐκ νεκρῶν *and ariſe from the dead.* And *Rom.* 6. 13. *Yield not your members as inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin, but yield your ſelves unto God, as thoſe that are alive from the dead.* Now to raiſe us from the death of ſin, into the life of *Righteouſneſs* by the amendment of our own lives, to *recover* us into a *ſtate of virtue*, is the thing *this Child* is ſaid here to be *ſet* for. This was that which *God* thought worth an *Incarnation*: neither was there any greater thing in the proſpect of his *everlaſting Counſel*, when He did decree his Son into the world, then that

that κεῖται εἰς ἀνάστασιν, He is *set for this.* The *Word was made flesh,* to *teach, practise,* and *perswade* to Vertue: To make men *reform* their lives, was valued at the price of a *person of the Trinity.* *Piety* and his *exinanttion,* yea, his *blood* and *life,* were set at the same rates, *All* of Him giv'n for our *recovery.*

The time would faile me if I should attempt only to name the various methods He makes use of to effect this. How *this Child* that was the *brightness of his Fathers glory,* came to lighten us, shining in his *Doctrine* and *Example*: how he sent more light, The *fiery Tongues,* Illuminations of the *Holy Ghost* to guide us in the ways of piety: how he suffer'd *Agonies* and *Death* for sin to appale and fright us from it. How He *rose again* to confirm *Judgement* to us, to demonstrate the *rewards of immortality* to them that will repent, and leave their sins, and *everlasting torments* to those that refuse this Grace; Grace *purchased* with the *blood of God,* to enable them to repent and leave. Besides all these, The *Arts* and *Mesnage* of his Providence, in *preventing* and *following* us by *Mercies* and by *Judgments, importuning* us, and *timeing* all his blessed Methods

Heb. 1. 3.

thods of Salvation to our moſt advantage. Arts, God knows, too many, if they ſerve us onely to *reſiſt*, and turn to *wantonneſs* and *aggravation*; if we make no other uſe of *Grace* but this, to *ſin againſt*, and *overcome* all Grace, and make it *bolſter Vice*, by teaching it to be an incouragement to go on in it; from ſome hopes we entertain by reaſon of *this Child*, inſtead of doing that which he was *ſet*, *decreed* to make us *do*.

And really I would be glad to ſee this *everlaſting Counſel* of the Lord had had ſome good effects, ſome, though never ſo little happy execution of this *great decree*, and that which God *ordein'd from all Eternity*, upon ſuch glorious and magnificent terms, were come to paſs in any kind; Now, certainly there are no evident ſigns of any great *recovery* this *Child* hath wrought among us in the world that's now call'd *Chriſtian*. After thoſe omnipotent inforcives to a vertuous life, which he did work out, if we take a proſpect of both *worlds*, it would be hard to know which were the *Heathen*; and there would appear ſcarce any other notice of a *Chriſt* among us, but that we *blaſpheme* Him or *deride* Him. Sure I am,

there are no footsteps of Him in the lives of the community of men: and I am certaine that you cannot shew me any *Heathen* age outgoing ours, either in *loosenesses* and *foul effeminacies*, or in *sordidness* and *base injustice*, or in *frauds* and *falseness*, or *malignity*, *hypocrisie* or *treachery*, or to name no more, even in the *lowest*, most *ignoble*, *disingenious* sorts of Vice. In fine, men are now as *Earthy*, *Sensual*, yea, and *Deviliſh*, as when *Sins* and *Devils* were their *Gods*.

Yea, I must needs say, that those times of *dark* and *Heathen* ignorance, were in many times of *shining* vertue; and the little spark of *light* within them, brake out through all obstructions into a *glory of goodness*, to the *wonder* and *confusion* of most Christians: 'Tis true, we are prity well reveng'd on them for setting us Examples so reproachful to us; calling their Heroick actions, *splendida peccata*, only *beauteous sins*, and *well fac'd wickednesses*, and we have a reason for it, because they never heard of *Christ*; whose *Name* and *Merit*, 'tis most certain, is the onely thing that can give *value* and *acceptance* to mens best performances: while, on the other side, we

Christi-

Christians comfort and secure our selves in our transgressions from *this Child*, and from his Name. But if *this Child* were set to *raise* us up from *sin*, and to establish *stronger arguments* for a *good life* then the *Heathen* ever heard of, more *especial Divine engagements* to vertue; then if their *vertues* were, because they never heard of these engagements to them, sins, what censure will be past upon their actions that *know* all those engagements and *despise* them? unless to *defy knowledge*, and *provoke* against all Divine obligations, all that *God* could lay, shall prove more tollerable then to labour to obey *without them, without knowing why*. 'Tis true, they had not heard it may be of that Name, then which *there is no other Name under Heaven given unto men whereby they may be saved.* Yet they endeavour'd in some measure to do that, which He that owns that Name, and wrought the Covenant of those Salvations, does require. We know that Name, and have it call'd upon us, and know too, That *he that names that Name*, (that calls himself a Christian, owns the being a retainer to the *Holy Jesus*) *must depart from Iniquity*, otherwise it is no name of Salvation

Acts 4. 12.

2 Tim. 2. 19

vation to him, yet we never mind the doing that; and then which hath the better Plea? The *Heathens* ſure were better, though he were *not vertuous.*

And if ſo, give me leave to tell you, how not only *this Child*, but *this Reſurrection* too is for our *fall.*

In the firſt *Chapter* to the *Romans*, we ſhall find thoſe *Heathens*, when they did neglect to follow the direction of that light within them, by which they were able to diſcover in ſome
Verſe 20. meaſure, *the inviſible things of* God, when they did no longer *care to retaine* God *in their*
Verſe 28. *knowledge*; then they quickly left off to be men: and when they ceaſt to hearken to their
Ibid. reaſon, they ſoon fell into a *reprobate ſenſe.* What was it elſe to change God into *ſtocks* and *ſtones*, and *Worſhip* into moſt *abominable wickedneſs?* to make the Vileſt creatures *Deities*, and the fouleſt actions *Religion:* to turne a *diſeaſe* into a God, and a *ſin* into *Devotion:* a ſtupidity, which nothing elſe but *Gods* deſertion and reaſons too, could have betray'd them to, and made them guilty of.

And then, if by how much *greater* light and means we have reſiſted, we ſhall be proportionably

tionably *more vile* in the consequents of doing so, keep at equal rates of distance from those *Heathens*, that the aggravations of our guilt stand at from theirs, Whether, *alas!* are we like to fall?

'Tis an amazing reflection, one would tremble to consider, how the *Christian* world does seem to hasten into that condition which St *Paul* does there decipher: You would think that Chapter were our *Character*: but that we have reason to expect we shall fall *lower* into much more *vile affections* then those Heathens did, as having fall'n down from a *greater height* then they.

Consider whether men do not declare *they like not to retain God in their thoughts*, when they endeavour to *dispute* and to *deride* him too out of the *World*! 'Tis true, they have not set up any *sins* or *monsters* in their *Temples* yet, as they did: but if they can empty them of *God* and *Christ*, and their *Religion*, and make room, we may imagine easily *whose* Votaries they will be, that live as if they thought themselves *unhappy* that they had not liv'd in those *good Pagan* dayes, when they might have *sin'd* with *devotion*, been most *wickedly Religious*,

Religious, and most *God-like* in *unchastities* and other *vilanies*; I dare say none of our *fine Gentlemen*, or our *great Wits*, would have been *Atheists* or *irreligious* then.

Think whether those are not already in that *reprobate sence* St. *Paul* does speak of, who have cast off all *discriminating notions*, of *good* or *evil*, who *say in their hearts*, & *affirm openly*, there are none such in *truth* and *nature*: and if we should try by those effects, *verse* 29, 30, 31. or by that essential signature, 32. *verse*, they not only *comit such things*, *but have pleasure in them that do them*; which because they cannot have from those commissions, when they do not commit them, therefore their debauch'd minds must be satisfied there is no evil in those doings, and must reap the pleasure only of such satisfactions: that is, have the *satisfactions* and *pleasures* onely of a *reprobate sense*. In fine, (because I dare not prosecute the character) Men sinck so fast, as if they were resolv'd to *fall* as far below *humanity*, as *this Child* did below his *Divinity*.

O do not you thus *break decrees*, *frustrate* and *overthrow* the *everlasting counsel* of God's will for good to you. He *set*, *ordained* this

Child

Child for your *riſing again*: do not throw your ſelves down into ruine in deſpite of his *Predeſtinations*. He hath *carried up* your nature into Heaven, plac'd *Fleſh* in an union with *Divinity*, ſet it there at the *right hand of God* in Glory: do not you *debaſe* and *drag* it down again to Earth and Hell by *worldlineſs* and *carnal ſenſuality*. Make appear this Child hath *rais'd* you up, already made a *reſurrection* of your *ſouls* and your *affections*; they converſe, and trade in Heaven: and that you do not degenerate from that nature of yours that is there. Then *this Child* who is Himſelf *the Reſurrection and the Life*, will raiſe up your Bodies too, and make them *like his glorious body, by the working of his mighty power, by which he is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf*. To *whom* with the *Father*, and the *H. Ghoſt* be all *Bleſſing*, *Power* and *Praiſe*, *Dominion* and *Glory* for Evermore.

Joh. 11. 25

Phil. 3. 21.

F I N I S.

[illegible] for your [illegible]: do not throw
your selves down into mine in despite of his
Perdefinitions. He hath carried by your nature
into Heaven, placed Flesh in union with
Deity, set it there at the right hand of God
in Glory: do not you [illegible] and drag it
down again to Earth and Hell by worldliness
and carnal sensuality. Make appear this Child
hath raised you up, already made a resurrec-
tion of your souls and your [illegible]; they
[illegible], and trade in Heaven: and that you
do not degenerate from that nature of yours
that is there. Then this Child who is himself
[illegible] and the [illegible], will raise up
your bodies too, and make them like his [illegible]
[illegible] by the working of his mighty power,
by [illegible] to subdue all things to himself.
To [illegible] the Father, and the H. Ghost
be all Blessing, Power and Praise, Dominion
and Glory for Evermore.

Joh. 11. 25

Phil. 3. 21.

P P N I S.